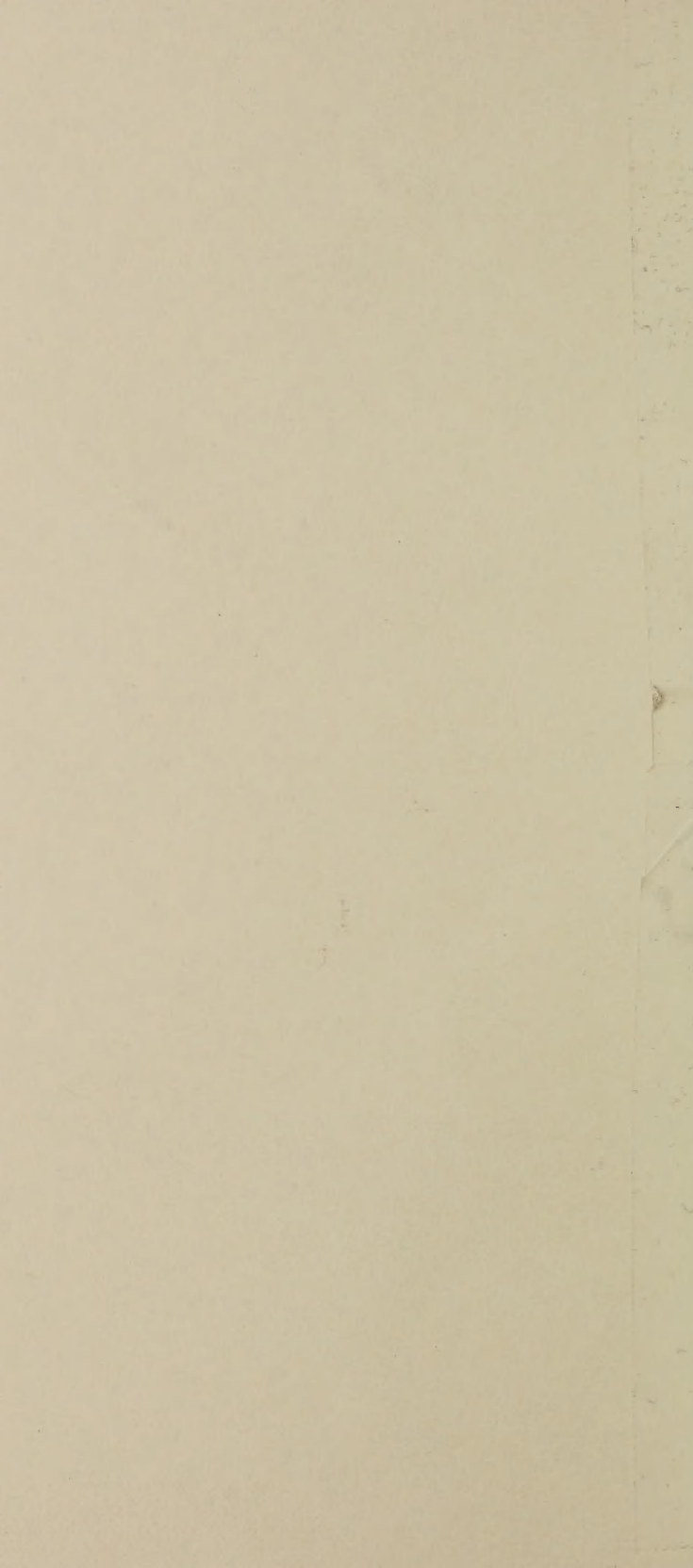


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Happy Holidays And...



Pacific Northwest Region
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...Christmas Tree Greetings

Christmas can be many things. Santa Claus and reindeer. The Nativity. Parties and friends. And of course, a brightly trimmed tree.

Christmas trees have been with us for a long time (since the early 1500's), and this year families will again center many activities around their own "tannenbaum." For many, buying and bringing home a tree marks the official beginning of the season.

As in the past, a limited number of Christmas trees are available from National Forest lands in the Pacific Northwest. But before you plan a long trek into the woods, you might consider other sources and outlets.

Vacant lots or parking areas may be good places to start. Christmas tree vendors make use of these areas during the holidays. You will likely find a variety of tree types and sizes available at the price you want.

If you are unable to leave your home, check with a local service club or youth organization. Sometimes they take orders for trees and provide delivery service to your door.

For a bit of adventure, think about driving to a "Choose-and-Cut" Christmas tree farm, select the one suited to your tastes, cut it and carry it fresh to your home. Lists of commercial growers are available from your county extension agent, local growers' associations, or Forest Service offices.

Trees From Your National Forest

National Forests are not managed specifically for production of Christmas trees. However, young trees are available on National Forest lands.

Usually these trees are found in designated cutting areas, under powerlines and along road rights-of-way (where trees must be kept small) or in young timber stands where thinning is required (thinning allows the remaining trees necessary room for healthy growth). Such areas are carefully chosen by foresters in accordance with sound management practices and for safe public access.

Trees in the wild, as compared to those commercially grown, are uncultured (without pruning, shearing, or fertilizing). Uncultured trees tend to grow rapidly with sparse, open branching.

Obtaining Your Tree

To legally cut a tree on the National Forest, you must have a Christmas Tree Permit.

Permits are being distributed by different methods in various parts of Oregon and Washington (first-come-first-serve, drawings, and so forth) depending on the number of Christmas trees available.

Contact the Forest Service office near you for information. They will tell you how to obtain a permit and provide maps outlining places where you can find trees.

Be sure you understand the regulations

governing the area in which you will be cutting. You should also check road and weather conditions to insure a safe trip.

Once your tree is cut, snap the permit around the trunk above the lowest branches. Remove the permit only after you return home. States have enacted strict laws to regulate the transport of Christmas trees on public highways, and your permit will identify your tree as legally cut from a National Forest.

A Few Hints For Your Safety

As you plan your trip, consider the following suggestions. They can go a long way in preventing a serious mishap.

1. Arrive at your cutting area before 3:00 p.m. Otherwise you will have to drive home in the dark. Chances for accidents increase at night and you run the risk of getting lost when you cannot see.

2. Stay off ungravelled roads. They are slick and muddy, and you can get stuck easily, possibly stranded overnight.

3. Your ax or saw is sharper than you think. Be careful—it is a long way to a doctor.

4. Carry tire chains and a shovel.

5. Steep terrain and deep, wet snow make walking more difficult than you may realize. Take it easy and enjoy the scenery.

6. Dress warmly. It is much colder in the mountains. Being wet and cold can take the fun out of an outing.



Caring For Your Tree

When you cut your tree, allow about 10 inches below the bottom whorl of branches for a handle. This also elevates the bottom of the tree above the floor at home and provides a means of mounting it in a stand.

Carry the tree carefully out of the woods. Dragging rubs the needles and buds off and scuffs the bark.

If the tree won't fit in the trunk or inside the car, wrap it in a tarp or heavy wrapping paper to prevent windburn. If the tree is transported inside the car, keep the heater turned down.

Store the tree temporarily in a wind-protected spot on the north or east side of the house or under the shade of larger trees. Place the cut end in a bucket of water to replenish moisture.

When you take the tree into your home, cut off the butt at least 1 inch above the original cut. Keep the tree standing in a container of water during the entire time the tree is in the house—a bucket of stones and water make a good stand. Refill the container daily as the tree absorbs the water.

Be sure the tree is well supported and is away from fireplaces, radiators, television sets and other sources of heat.

To prevent a fire, check electric lights and connections. Worn, frayed cords must not be used, and overloaded circuits should be avoided. Never use lighted candles or other open flames on or about Christmas trees.

Avoid using combustible decorations and flammable reflectors for the colored lights. Metal foil "icicles" or tinsel must be kept out of bulb sockets. Accumulations of wrapping paper and the placing of electrical toys under the tree can be very dangerous.

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R6-10-RG-296-87

